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CAPITOL STUFF

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Washington, July 23—Secretary of State Rusk's trip to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee late today marked the formal start of President Kennedy's campaign to win Senate support for a partial atomic test-ban deal with Russia.

Actually, however, Administration lieutenants have been greasing the ways for weeks. Highly placed informed sources say the President is now convinced that he not only can win Senate ratification but win in a big way.

One of the reasons for the confidence, it was reported, is that some powerful Republican leaders have privately indicated that they will go to bat for a simple test-ban agreement, if necessary, to swing the needed two-thirds vote.

Former President Eisenhower, for example, relayed his commitment some time ago to disarmament director William C. Foster. He told Foster that if the Administration ever needed his help on the testing issue, he would supply it. Officials said privately that Ike is prepared, if he has to, to lay his considerable prestige on the line publicly in Senate hearings on the issue.

Although some people have apparently forgotten the fact, the idea of a partial test ban was first proposed by Ike in a letter to Premier Khrushchev in April, 1959. And he had the support of the late John Foster Dulles, who still was Secretary of State although ailing and near death.

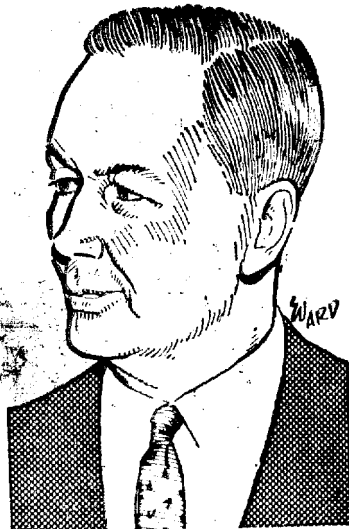
Indeed, Ike felt so strongly about the necessity of somehow braking the atomic arms race that he later ordered American testing halted without any kind of a deal with Russia. And, even though this one-way moratorium went sour, friends say he still feels strongly about the need for a test ban.

Ike, however, is not the only important Republican whom Administration strategists say they can call on in case of need, or even maybe without need. Another is said to be Allen Dulles, chief of the CIA under Ike and for a time under Kennedy. Still another name jotted down on some Administration lists is Henry Cabot Lodge, GOP Vice Presidential candidate in 1960 and Kennedy's recent choice to be ambassador to South Viet Nam.

Dangers Make Ban a Bipartisan Issue

As the U. S. ambassador to the UN during nearly all of Ike's administration, Lodge repeatedly cited the merits of a test ban. He argued that even an uninspected ban on atmospheric blasts only would be an important first step toward wider agreements and "immediately reduce the fears of fallout."

The key fact about the looming debate over a test ban, then, is that it is essentially a bipartisan issue. Two Presidents—one Republican and one Democratic—have gazed down the long corridor of the atomic arms competition and recoiled from the dangers it poses for the human race. Their advisers—Secretaries of State and Defense—have had the same reaction.



William C. Foster
Has Ike's pledge to help

On the other hand, some key military leaders—currently majority of the Pentagon's high command—and some Congressmen of both political parties have grave misgivings. And it is important, on the eve of decision, to understand the central issues of both sides of the debate.

The mainspring of the push for a test ban agreement is a fear drawn from the earth's long history, that uncontrolled arms races lead to war. The Canadian Army Journal recently asserted that there have been 1,600 arms races in the last 2,500 years and that all but 16 ended in destructive warfare. In this atomic age a similar outcome would mean incalculable human ruin.

Increasing Arms Cost a Drain on Economy

The Administration and supporters such as Sens. Thomas J. Dodd (D-Conn.) and Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) argue that one of the greatest potentials in even a partial test ban is that it might dampen down the arms spiral. At least, they say, it should curtail development of the mammoth superbombs.

One motivation for this, officials say, is the fact that the cost of building these immense and complex weapons is increasing at an incredible rate, with a resultant heavy drain on the economy. In addition, they say, there is always the fear that full-scale testing will lead to some scientific breakthrough which might make Russian or some other atomic power dangerously reckless.

From a strictly military viewpoint Kennedy and his top advisers agree that Russia may have a lead in some key areas, such as the so-called antimissile missile and the superbombs. But, contrary to the opinion of some military men, they feel the U.S. still has a solid second-strike capacity and an over-all atomic lead. Under the circumstances, they argue that there is even a potential military advantage in freezing large megaton testing.

Ban Might Discourage Atomic Ambitions

The Administration also argues that the proposed partial test ban would tend to restrain most other countries—if not France and Red China—from jumping into the atomic arms race because many nations are looking for a good reason to skip an extremely expensive effort.

Still another argument is that a test ban could open the door to further measures to reduce East-West tensions. If this all turns sour, they insist that the West could again swing back to big bomb testing.

On the other side of the coin, the chief argument against a ban is that it would cripple American atomic weapons development at a time when Russia may have a lead in some critical areas.

The upshot is that a test-ban decision represents a critical weighing of advantages against risks. The President has sided with the advantages, and the present head-counting in the Senate indicates that it will follow suit.